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MONTANA FEDERAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICAL SERVICE

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MONTANA PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1950

A slight decrease in acreage of spring planted crops in Montana is in prospect for 1950. Farmers expressed their intentions on March 1 to seed 5,563,000 acres of principal crops this year compared with plantings of 5,646,000 acres in 1949. Plantings of spring wheat, flaxseed, dry beans, dry peas and potatoes are to be smaller than last year but nearly offset by an increased acreage of corn, oats, barley and sugar beets. The increase in prospective plantings of feed grains is largely the result of diverting wheat acreage which is under allotment to increase the supply of feed grains.

Moisture conditions are less favorable now than they were a year ago. The spring wheat belt is carrying a very low moisture reserve and the outcome of the new crop will depend upon normal or above normal precipitation during the 1950 growing season. The heavy snowfalls that occurred during the winter months should provide sufficient moisture for seed germination but heavy rains will be needed during April, May and June to develop and mature spring seeded crops. Crop damage from grasshoppers now appears to be less threatening than it was a year ago. Egg counts indicate that the 1950 hatch will be considerably lighter than in 1949. Farm machinery and the farm labor supply will be generally adequate as the trend in mechanizing farm operations continues.

WHEAT: Prospective plantings of 3,807,000 acres of spring wheat is indicated as of March 1. This is 10 percent less than the 4,230,000 acres seeded last year. The acreage of winter wheat seeded last fall of 1,508,000 acres when added with expected spring wheat plantings, totals 5,315,000 acres. This compares with 5,906,000 acres of all wheat for 1949, a reduction of 10 percent. Winter wheat abandonment is expected to be normal as moisture condition and snow cover has been generally satisfactory in the principal winter wheat areas.

FEED GRAINS & FLAX: Farmers intend to increase their acreage of barley 45 percent, oats 25 percent and corn by 4 percent over last year's plantings. If they follow through with their intentions, the barley acreage will total 886,000 acres, oats 481,000 and corn 104,000 acres. The aggregate for these feed crops total 1,586,000 acres compared with 1,207,000 acres in 1949. A considerable reduction in flaxseed acreage is in prospect, caused mainly by the heavy abandonment that occurred last year in the drought areas. Plantings this spring is indicated to be 57,000 acres against 95,000 acres of last year.

OTHER PLANTED CROPS: Acreage reductions are indicated for dry beans and potatoes which will be under allotment in 1950. Dry bean plantings of 20,000 acres is in prospect compared with 25,000 acres planted last year. The potato acreage at 15,000 is 1,000 acres under 1949. The reduction in these crops will be offset by an increased acreage of sugar beets. March 1 intentions indicate 72,000 acres will be planted to sugar beets, against 65,000 planted last year. A 2,000 acre reduction in dry peas appears likely from the 8,000 acres planted in 1949.

MONTANA: PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1950

CROP	AVERAGE 1939 - 1948		ACRES PLANTED			
	Acres Planted	Yield per Pl. Acre Amount Unit	1949	Indicated 1950	1950 as % of 1949	
				(1,000 Acres)	(Percent)	
Corn.....	194	15.9	Bu.	211	219	104
Spring Wheat....	2,759	14.7	"	4,230	3,807	90
Oats.....	459	27.2	"	385	481	125
Barley.....	574	24.0	"	611	886	145
Flaxseed.....	226	6.1	"	95	57	60
Beans, dry.....	28	1,178	Lbs.	25	20	80
Peas, dry.....	32	1,150	"	8	6	75
Sugar beets.....	76	11.0	Tons	65	72	111
Potatoes.....	17.1	117	Bu.	16	15	94
All Hay 1/.....	2,144	1.21	Tons	2,288	2,380	104

1/ Data for all hay relates to acres for harvest.

U. S. PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1950

A relatively large acreage of spring-sown crops is in prospect for 1950. The increase in the total of 17 crops (including hay) for which prospective acreages are estimated, is from 24.2 million acres in 1949 to 277.9 million acres this season. In terms of total planted acreage, this increase is more than offset, however, by the large decline in winter wheat seeded last fall. Declines in acreages are large for corn and spring wheat, small for peanuts, dry beans, rice, potatoes and tobacco; all these are crops for which acreage allotments will be in effect in 1950. Other declines are planned in flax and dry peas. But more than offsetting these declines are intended increases in oats, barley, soybeans, sorghums, hay, sugar beets, sweet-potatoes and cowpeas. Spring activities are normal to advanced over most of the country, though checked somewhat by cold March weather. Soil moisture is satisfactory, except in the southern Great Plains. Irrigation water supplies are mostly adequate, the chief exception being in New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada.

Principal crops planted or grown in 1950 may total nearly 359 million acres, allowing for duplications and for numerous crops not yet surveyed. This would be about 10½ million acres less than in 1949, also less than in 1948, 1944 and 1943, but would exceed the total in any other year since 1937. The peak period was in 1930-33, when the range was 369.5 to 375.5 million acres.

Feed grains may be planted on nearly 4 million acres more than in 1949, according to present plans. But this 2½ percent increase in acreage may not bring about an increase in production. The prospective acreage of corn is 5 million acres less than planted in 1949, with most of the reduction in the high-yielding Corn Belt and adjacent States, but some offsetting increases in lower-yielding southern States. Furthermore, per acre tonnages of the grains which are being increased are not as large as for corn. Increases of nearly 3½ million acres of oats, over 2½ million acres of barley and nearly 3 million acres of sorghums raise the feed grain aggregate acreage above that of 1949.

CROP	PLANTED ACREAGES			
	Average 1939-48	1949	Indicated 1950	1950 as pct. of 1949
		Thousands		
Corn, all.....	89,825	87,910	82,765	94.1
All spring wheat.....	18,072	22,559	19,727	87.4
Durum.....	2,623	3,693	3,260	88.3
Other spring.....	15,450	18,866	16,467	87.3
Oats.....	42,891	44,525	47,964	107.7
Barley.....	14,713	11,208	13,879	123.8
Flaxseed.....	3,869	5,199	4,027	77.5
Rice.....	1,451	1,839	1,645	89.5
Sorghums for all purposes....	16,635	11,754	14,568	123.9
Potatoes.....	2,718	1,924	1,862	96.8
Sweetpotatoes.....	690	548	603	110.0
Tobacco 1/.....	1,650	1,626	1,582	97.3
Beans, dry edible.....	2,022	1,900	1,678	88.3
Peas, dry field.....	496	367	281	76.6
Soybeans 2/.....	12,059	11,409	13,500	118.3
Cowpeas 2/.....	2,241	1,177	1,192	101.3
Peanuts 2/.....	3,634	2,929	2,570	87.7
Hay 1/.....	74,470	72,835	75,091	103.1
Sugar beets.....	851	769	980	127.4

1/ Acreage harvested. 2/ Grown alone for all purposes.

P. J. Creer, Agr. Statistician In Charge
Lyman W. Wallin, Agricultural Statistician

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